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UNCLAS ADANA 000028

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR FEBRUARY 14, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for February 14, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

OZGUR GUNDEM: Huseyin Aygun, attorney and former Chairperson of the Tunceli Bar Association, claimed that Tunceli's Jandarma Commander Namik Dursun threatened to kill him. Commander Dursun was previously reported to have threatened and insulted the headmen in Tunceli in late December 2004. Aygun, who applied to the Elazig Human Rights Association, held a press conference along with Tunceli's CHP MPs, stated that Dursun accused him of "being a traitor" and "an enemy of the (Turkish) State." Aygun further claimed that Dursun threatened to kill him by (allegedly) stating, "We will get rid of his (Aygun's) physical existence; we will defame him."

CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL: Demonstrations were held in many cities -- including Adana, Bursa, Antep, and Batman -- to protest Turkey's capture of Abdullah Ocalan six years ago. Turkish National Police intervened with pepper gas spray and water cannons in Mersin when a 300-person group, chanting slogans, attempted to walk to the city's Akdeniz District.

TERCUMAN / BOLGE / VAKIT / ZAMAN / TURKIYE / CUMHURIYET: Iraq announced that it plans to close the (Ibrahim Khalil) Border Gate for five days on February 17. Trucks transporting fuel have therefore lined up in 45 kilometer-long lines on the Turkish side, causing a bottleneck in the flow of traffic at the Habur Border Gate in Silopi, Sirnak province. Drivers estimate that the line will exceed 50 kilometers today.

CUMHURIYET: Following the visit of Gen. John Abizaid last month, U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) Commander Burwell Bell will come to Ankara this week to discuss defense cooperation issues, especially the more effective use of Incirlik Airbase as a logistics center, which is an issue that has been on the defense agenda of the two countries since Abizaid's last visit.

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): The Ministry of Defense announced a tender invitation pursuant to a Council of Ministers decision to clean up areas affected by mines. Aslan Kutukcu, Governor of Kilis, stated that the Kilis Governor's Office could offer a much lower bid than those offered by private companies to de-mine the areas within Kilis province. Moreover, Kutukcu claims the Office of the Governor would have another competitive advantage: the people recruited for this endeavor would be the natives of the province who are familiar with the land.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Attempts to remove the toxic waste of the M/V Ulla, which sank in Iskenderun Gulf on September 6, 2004, are underway. (Note: Ankara 5168 covers the sinking incident and related environmental concerns. End note.) AKP Antakya MP Mehmet Soydan announced to fishermen and environmentalists that bids will be taken today and tomorrow for the task of bringing the ship to the surface. According to Soydan, this task will be completed by March 2005.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. EKSPRES / BOLGE / TURKIYE: Ayhan Barut, Branch Chairperson of the Chamber of Agricultural Engineers, stated that drastic low temperatures and the frost experienced in the Cukurova region seriously damaged vegetables and fruit (especially citrus fruit) that has not been harvested yet. (Note: Cukurova is a wide fertile agricultural plain. End Note.)

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